MOOREVILLE RIDGE INSECT AND DISEASE RESILIENCE PROJECT

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION REPORT

Background the Mooreville Ridge Insect and Disease Resilience Project Decision was signed May 6, 2020. The Mooreville Integrated Resources Timber Contract (IRTC) was subsequently offered and awarded to the winning bidder on July 23, 2020. On the afternoon of September 8, 2020, the Bear Fire (part of the North Complex Incident) driven by extreme winds, heavy dry fuels, and steep terrain experienced spread rates of 1,000 acres per 30 minutes resulting in an additional 80,000 acres being added to the fire footprint in a 24 hours period. The fire burned into the Mooreville project killing many trees.

Proposed Project Location the Mooreville project area is located about 2 miles west and southwest of La Porte, CA at elevations ranging between 3,700 and 5,900 feet (39.681883N and 121.022552W). Annual precipitation ranges between 70 and 90 inches. Most of the area is comprised of Sierra mixed conifer consisting of white fir (*Abies concolor*), Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*), sugar pine (*Pinus lambertiana*), incense cedar (*Calocedrus decurrens*), red fir (*Abies magnifica*), California black oak (*Quercus kelloggii*), and Pacific madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*). Most of the lower elevation stands are pine dominated mixed conifer while higher elevation stands are mostly fir dominated mixed conifer. Shade-intolerant pine species are mostly restricted to the overstory with limited regeneration due to overcrowding and dominance of white fir.

Changed Circumstances After the Decision the Mooreville project proposes to reduce the risk of insect and disease-caused tree mortality through mechanical thinning. Fuels reduction and maintenance would be accomplished with mastication and prescribed burning. White fir will be removed in favor of retaining other tree species. The residual stands will be more open, increasing the amount of available soil moisture and sunlight for individual trees. We will treat no more than 3,000 acres.

Excessive crown scorch on trees of all species and high levels of cambium kill around the base of large trees are the most common injuries leading to post-fire mortality. Fire killed trees left unmitigated will become hazardous fuels.

A larger number of wildfires are burning more acres at high severity across the state. The Mendocino Complex, McNally, Moonlight, Rim, King, Reading, Rough, Pier, Carr, and Camp Fires (and now the North Complex) are just a few examples of large fires since 2000 that resulted in the loss of numerous lives and thousands of acres of conifer forest. The cost of fighting California wildfires and the post-fire restoration efforts add up to hundreds of millions of dollars annually (USDA Forest Service 2019).

The need to create resilient forests at the landscape scale has never been more critical. We must be able to work faster over a much larger area to achieve meaningful change on the landscape before more acres are lost to disturbance. This will require collaboration with multiple stakeholders and the strategic use of Farm Bill authorities such as the categorical

exclusion of restoration treatments in identified insect and disease high risk area. We also need to think strategically and prioritize treatment areas based on risk to bark beetle outbreaks and stand replacing wildfire (USDA Forest Service 2019).

Section 605 (HFRA) establishes a categorical exclusion for hazardous fuels reduction projects in designated areas on National Forest System lands. A hazardous fuels reduction project that may be categorically excluded under this authority is a project that is designed to maximize the retention of old-growth and large trees, to the extent that the trees promote stands that are resilient to insects and disease, and reduce the risk or extent of, or increase the resilience to, wildfires (HFRA, Sections 605(b)(1)(A)).

The changed circumstances are still within the scope and range of effects considered. The change requires a revision to the original decision in:

- Salvage Cut (4231) an intermediate harvest removing trees which are dead or dying because of injurious agents other than competition, to recover economic value that would otherwise be lost. Salvage will be conducted following designation by damage class (attachment A). Follow marking guidelines for fire-injured trees in California (Smith and Cluck 2011). The SNFPA (USDA Forest Service 2004) provides for boundaries of PAC to be reviewed and adjusted as necessary to better include known and suspected nest stands and encompass the best available 300 acres of habitat. No sawlog diameter limits for salvage cut. SNFPA guidelines for snag retention apply.

The revision to the approved project that is still being implemented is best accomplished by authorizing the additional activity through a new decision categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA) under HFRA Section 605.

Purpose of Action We propose to remove fire killed trees that would become dangerous fuels, to reduce the risk or extent of, or increase the resilience to, wildfires.

Need for Action Section 605(c), of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) authorizes hazardous fuels reduction projects that reduce the risk or extent of, or increase the resilience to, wildfires.

The January, 2004 Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment provides for ecosystem restoration following catastrophic disturbance events through the salvage harvest of dead and dying trees conducted to recover the economic value of this material and to support objectives for reducing hazardous fuels, improving forest health, reintroducing fire, and/or reestablishing forested conditions.

Providing socioeconomic benefits, including the provision of a sustainable supply of timber, is part of the mandate of the USDA Forest Service. Providing adequate timber supplies contributes to the economic stability of rural communities in Sierra Nevada forests.